

Formula for Disaster **METHAMPHETAMINE**

Officials Warn of Methamphetamine Danger

*Increased Manufacturing of Illegal Drug
Poses Heightened Risk To Jackson County*

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Jackson, Michigan. In a special news conference today in Blackman Township, Jackson County authorities warned citizens that the production and use of the illegal drug Methamphetamine has greatly increased in and around Jackson County. The increases also prompted law enforcement and community health officials to issue a warning regarding the personal, health, and environmental dangers associated with the illegal manufacturing of Methamphetamine. Their warning is directed at law enforcement officers, first responders, and community members coming into contact with a Methamphetamine manufacturing operation.

In addition, officials also promoted a toll-free tip line for reporting the manufacturing, sale, and use of Methamphetamine. Individuals can call **1-866-METH TIP (1-866-638-4847)**, to report suspicious activities, or their nearest law enforcement agency or 911 to report a crime in progress or suspicious Meth activities. All calls to the Meth Tip line are confidential and callers remain anonymous.

Officials revealed that in the past, most of the Methamphetamine activities in the state were concentrated in Allegan County and southwestern Michigan. While authorities have seen a spread of Methamphetamine activities to other parts of the state, Jackson County is now ranked second in the number of seized clandestine cooking operations--or laboratories, as authorities call them.

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“As of this May 2003, 14 Methamphetamine laboratories have been seized in Jackson County, compared to only 5 labs discovered in 2002,” said Jackson County Prosecutor Hank Zavislak. “In addition, we have seen an increase in the number of Meth related activities and arrests in Jackson County.”

Statewide, State Police figures show 206 Methamphetamine labs were seized in 2002, up 115 labs from 2001. With 104 Meth labs already discovered in the first five months of 2003, officials estimate that more than 275 labs could be seized before the end of the year. While authorities are quick to point out that Michigan is not experiencing the explosion of Meth lab sites as have other states--Missouri for example had more than 2,100 Meth laboratories--they are warning that the environment for Methamphetamine cookers and users in Michigan is ripe for turning Michigan into a major problem state, unless preventive and educational measures are put into place.

“The rising number of Methamphetamine labs in the United States, and in Michigan, are greatly threatening the personal safety, health, and environmental stability of our communities,” said Ms. Yvonne Blackmond, Director, Office of Drug Control Policy. “Methamphetamine creates an instant danger to family, children, and neighbors exposed to the manufacturing process as well as for first responders and community workers who might accidentally stumble upon a Methamphetamine site.”

What makes Methamphetamine activities distinctly unique from other illegal drugs are the serious danger and health effects resulting from individuals responding to Methamphetamine scenes. Law enforcement and public safety officers can encounter individuals who have symptoms resembling paranoid schizophrenia, delusion, anger, panic, hallucinations, and homicidal or suicidal thoughts. Authorities also warn that toxic gas leaks, chemical fires, explosions, contaminated ground water, drinking water supply, soils, and equipment are all associated with clandestine lab sites, like the ones found in Jackson County.

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"Officers entering a Methamphetamine scene can quickly encounter serious health problems and injuries, including serious burns, collapsed lungs, and injuries resulting from explosions," said Colonel Tadarial Sturdivant, Director, Michigan State Police.

"We are currently educating law enforcement officers and dispatchers across the state to the red flags and indicators that would indicate a possible Methamphetamine cooking site. Special precautions are then taken to ensure the safety of all those responding to the scene," continued Sturdivant.

"Public Health concerns and the effect on living conditions due to the manufacturing of methamphetamine and its hazardous waste by-products are a priority for the Jackson County Health Department," said Eric Pessell, Director of the Environmental Health Division, Jackson County Health Department. "Large amounts of hazardous waste are generated during the production of methamphetamine which can contaminate the environment that comes into contact with it such as homes, yards, cars, rooms, etc."

Included in today's announcement were several other initiatives designed to inform the public of the danger associated with Methamphetamine. The Michigan Department of Community Health, Office of Drug Control Policy is currently disseminating brochures and radio public service announcements, the Michigan State Police has produced a roll-call training video for officers responding to a Methamphetamine scene, and private and public sector networks are being formed to mobilize efforts to heighten awareness on this issue.

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